

Contentious politics and contentious scholarship: challenges researching social movements in South Africa

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Contentious Politics and Contentious Scholarship: Challenges Researching Social Movements in South Africa

Abstract

This article explores challenges associated with conducting research on social movements in South Africa (and beyond). Scholarship and commentary on South African social movements is a contentious and contested field. This article reflects particularly on carrying out research relating to land and housing rights and on the relationships between scholars, activists and activist-scholars working in this area. There is a particular difficulty with regard to identifying and analysing the political biases present within various opposing accounts of the social movements taking action on land and housing issues and their relationships to other actors. The article argues that there are three main pitfalls which researchers should attempt to avoid. First there is the danger of taking the claims made by social movements and by their academic advocates at face value. The second pitfall, on the other hand, relates to the danger of dismissing the praxis of these social movements altogether. The third danger surrounds the risk of the debates and disagreements between academics and commentators overshadowing discussion of the issues upon which movements work. The article suggests that it is necessary to apply a critical lens to all knowledge produced about social movements taking action on land and housing issues in South Africa and, consequently, a number of questions remain unresolved when attempting to put together an accurate picture of the relationships between and praxis of groups and organisations working in this area.

Keywords:

Social movements; South Africa; housing rights; activist-scholarship; human rights

Introduction

Scholarship and commentary on South African social movements is a contentious and contested field.¹ This article grows out of a wider project exploring the approaches of, and relationships between, social movements, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions taking action in the area of land and housing rights in South Africa. In relation to this research, there is a particular difficulty with regard to identifying and analysing the political biases present within various opposing accounts of the social movements taking action on land and housing issues and their relationships to other actors. It is necessary to apply a critical lens to all knowledge produced about these movements and, consequently, a number of questions remain unresolved when attempting to put together an accurate picture of the relationships between and praxis of groups and organisations working on land and housing issues. These issues, furthermore, resonate with and have implications for understanding activism (and its relation to scholarship) on issues beyond land and housing rights, and in contexts other than South Africa. Fundamentally, this article seeks to problematise and provide a critique of overly simplistic assumptions regarding the alignment between social movement activists and scholar advocates of social movements. In so doing, the article seeks to identify and begin to think through the ethical and political implications of activist-scholarship in South Africa and beyond.

This article first sets out background information on land and housing rights activism in South Africa and the positioning of key actors in this area. Following this, the article outlines some of the challenges researching social movements in South Africa as manifested in the divergent positions of key activists and scholars, particularly in regard to the shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo. The article then builds on this with discussion of the controversy which emerged following the publication of a critical paper by former

Abahlali baseMjondolo general secretary Bandile Mdlalose in the journal *Politikon*.² Implications for research and practice are then discussed. Finally, the article concludes by reflecting on the potential pitfalls associated with research in this area.

These potential pitfalls are, first, the danger of taking the claims made by social movements and by their academic advocates at face value. Key implications of this are that ignoring, or remaining unaware of, the fact social movements and their advocates might seek to present a positive image (with regard to movements' size, influence and efficacy, for instance) for the purposes of advocacy, propaganda or (in a sense) marketing,³ leads to the danger that the value of scholarship in this area will be reduced.⁴

The second pitfall is the danger of dismissing the praxis of these social movements altogether. There is no doubt, for example, that social movements (including those focused upon in this article) can and do contribute to human rights.⁵ Much like big international NGOs but differently manifested, social movements contribute to the defining and understanding of what rights are and how they ought to be pursued. This has both potentially positive and more negative implications.⁶

The third pitfall is the risk of the debates and disagreements between academics and commentators overshadowing discussion of the issues upon which movements work. Reflecting on these, the article calls for critical engagement with the claims of both movement advocates and critics, noting that the nature of the intellectual and political terrain in this area necessarily leaves some questions unanswered.

The article, in a sense, begins from and builds upon a position similar to that of Charles Hale, who argues based on reflection on the difficulties and contradictions of activist-scholarship with (as it happens, land rights-oriented) movements he has engaged with, that

‘movements are both inspiring and compromised; movement activists are courageous advocates of local and global justice yet partly implicated in the very systems of oppression they set out to oppose’.⁷ Reflection upon this is particularly important in relation to social movement research as opposed to research on other areas related to human rights (such as that concerned with elite legal and political institutions or the abstract theorisation of first principles). This is due to the degree to which social movement actions and their relationships with scholars (including in relation to differential power dynamics) can have an impact in practice, the immediacy of this impact, and the potential for these actions, relationships and their consequences to lead to further dilemmas and implications which (either positively or negatively) affect the lived experience of social movement participants (as well as of scholars, or activist-scholars).

Background: land and housing rights-related activism in post-apartheid South Africa

South Africa’s post-apartheid transition is sometimes heralded as an archetypal human rights success story. The human rights provisions of the new constitution – which include justiciable economic and social rights (including a right to housing) – are also frequently praised.⁸ Nevertheless, profound inequalities persist. These include profound (and highly racialised) inequity in access to land and housing, which has its roots in apartheid and colonialism.⁹ Since the early 2000s especially, social movements seeking to address these issues have emerged and risen to prominence. Repressive and violent responses from the state (and other actors) have also not been uncommon.¹⁰ Few of these movements primarily frame their activities as human rights based. Nevertheless, many of these, including the movements discussed in most detail throughout this article, make use of legal human rights protections and the language of human rights at times and can, regardless of how their activities are

overtly framed, be analysed from the perspective of their contribution to the realisation of human rights as understood broadly.¹¹

In relation to the movements discussed in this article (as well as more generally), it is worth noting that human rights are not just about law, or about a single, authoritative, narrow, interpretation of norms.¹² They are not just about negative freedoms which historically dominated (Western) human rights NGOs' campaigns. Human rights are also about social justice.¹³ Moreover, human rights discourse and practice ought to also be about opposition to economic and political paradigms which negate their realisation and in favour of those which promote their realisation. In order for human rights to be consistent, effective and progressive, this means neoliberalism must be opposed on human rights grounds.¹⁴

The research out of which this article grew focussed particularly on land and housing rights-related activism in urban areas of the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa, particularly in the cities of Cape Town (Western Cape) and Johannesburg (Gauteng). This research involved mapping the relationships (including national and international relationships) between NGOs, trade unions and social movement organisations taking action on land and housing rights related issues in these areas. In mapping this network, three main clusters of actors were evident, which warrant brief introduction here in order to provide context for the discussion which follows in the rest of the article.

The Poor People's Alliance is a grouping of social movement organisations (based in different parts of South Africa) containing the Landless People's Movement, the Rural Network, Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign.¹⁵ As much of the rest of this article concerns issues which emerge from activist-scholar discussion of Abahlali baseMjondolo it is worth highlighting that, since the movement's inception

(following a 2005 road blockade protest in Durban's Kennedy Road informal settlement) the movement has, in Shannon Walsh's words,

been the source of a great deal of academic and activist writing... cropping up in the *New York Times*, the *Mail and Guardian*, the *Economist*, *Isolezwe* (isiZulu paper), and almost all of the other South African papers including most radio and television stations in the country.¹⁶

Moreover, this coverage 'quickly turned [Abahlali baseMjondolo] into a cause célèbre within the South African Left, gaining the movement significant notice by city officials'.¹⁷

The second cluster identified in the research upon which this article draws is the Housing Assembly, based in Cape Town. This brings together a number of social movements and community based organisations with the International Labour Research and Information Group (an NGO specialising in education and research work for trade unions and social movements) and the Cape Town branch of the South African Municipal Workers' Union.¹⁸

Finally, there are the groups closely associated with Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), which comprises federations of affiliated shack dwellers and slum dwellers, an NGO secretariat and local affiliate NGO across a large number of countries in the global South, including South Africa.¹⁹ There are a number of overlaps and links between each of these clusters – particularly between the Poor People's Alliance and the Housing Assembly – but there is also, at times, a degree of competition and antipathy between these clusters and the groups (and individuals) which participate in them.²⁰

Opposing commentaries of Richard Pithouse and Heinrich Böhmke

Activist-scholarship (and scholar-activism) exists on a spectrum. At one extreme of the spectrum one might think of university based academics who conduct research and write with

a view to effecting change (in attitudes or material conditions) through the impact of their scholarship (scholarship as activism, perhaps).²¹ At the other extreme, one might think of social movements' organic intellectuals, fully embedded within activism but learning from and theorising this through lived experience from the ground up (activism as scholarship, perhaps).²² Between these two extremes lie a range of positions and approaches which cover much of what tends to be put forward as activist-scholarship, including much of that discussed in this article.²³ The overlap between scholarship and activism in the study of social movements presents a number of dilemmas for researchers.²⁴

The contrasting positions of, and disagreements between, Richard Pithouse and Heinrich Böhmke are indicative of the dilemmas associated with research in the specific area this article covers.²⁵ Both Böhmke and Pithouse have been involved in South African social movements as activist-scholars, particularly in relation to the shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo.²⁶ Pithouse is a university based academic who has published widely on social movements (especially Abahlali baseMjondolo) in scholarly and popular outlets.²⁷ Böhmke is not an academic (he is a lawyer, consultant and writer) but can nevertheless reasonably be considered to be an activist-scholar due to his frequent commentary on social movements in both journalistic and more scholarly forms.²⁸ He has, for instance, distributed detailed (if polemical) research papers via his personal websites and has contributed to scholarly publications such as Ashwin Desai's influential 2002 book *We Are the Poors*, in which he co-authored a chapter.²⁹

Whilst Pithouse remains closely associated with Abahlali baseMjondolo,³⁰ Böhmke has moved to more of an outsider position and has been highly critical of the practices of social movements including Abahlali baseMjondolo and, particularly, their relationships with intellectuals such as Pithouse.³¹ The specific impact of Pithouse and Böhmke's (opposing) commentaries on understanding social movements in South Africa is discussed below.

On the one hand Böhmke has accused Pithouse of misrepresenting social movements, particularly Abahlali baseMjondolo.³² For instance, Böhmke makes the claim that views attributed to Abahlali baseMjondolo are merely reproductions of Pithouse's position and that Pithouse and others have exaggerated the membership and influence of Abahlali baseMjondolo.³³ On the other hand, Böhmke is accused of racism and of promoting conspiracy theories about the allegedly malevolent influence of (mostly) white intellectuals (such as Pithouse) on poor people's social movement struggles.³⁴ Indeed, much of Pithouse's work has (often persuasively) advanced the argument that the capacity of poor people (and the social movements in which they mobilise) to think and act politically (including outside the dominant structures of established institutions) ought to be taken seriously.³⁵ Further muddying the intellectual quagmire, Pithouse has accused scholars such as Adam Habib and Kumi Naidoo of taking part in 'imperialist' projects and of contributing to the 'literature of co-option'.³⁶

On the face of it neither Böhmke's nor Pithouse's position can be easily disproved. An outside researcher exploring this area must therefore tread particularly carefully in order to avoid falling into the trap of accepting either Böhmke's or Pithouse's view without sufficient cause. Accusations of unethical conduct and misrepresentations levelled against both Pithouse and Böhmke (and their supporters, plus other activists and scholars in South Africa) have flown back and forth for some years and frequently make for troubling reading.³⁷ Marcelle Dawson and Luke Sinwell, for instance, note that, following the emergence of post-apartheid social movements, writing about them was largely done by (both university-based and independent) activist-scholars ('many of whom are white') who

were directly involved in shaping the character of the movements as far as ideology and tactics were concerned. It was not long before this group of authors became the target for vitriolic attacks from within and outside the academy, but especially by

activists who criticised some of the movements for having a colonial mentality and who accused the white, educated leaders of trying to dominate and control the poor black followers in their pursuit of academic interests.³⁸

They argue that '[m]uch of this critique was exaggerated and some of it was unfounded, but it had an impact on the practice of social movement scholarship in South Africa'.³⁹ The debates and dilemmas this article is concerned with (and the very production of the article) reflect this, ongoing, impact.

It is, perhaps, worth noting at this point, that this article and the research upon which it draws is written from the perspective of someone largely outside of the events and organisations discussed (and, to boot, a white foreigner, resident in South Africa for only some parts of the research process), but peripherally and indirectly connected to some of the actors involved (as colleagues or research participants, for instance).⁴⁰ The research project upon which this article reflects was not primarily concerned with Abahlali baseMjondolo for instance, and neither Pithouse nor Böhmke (nor Mdlalose) were directly encountered during this research. Nevertheless, the issues and events highlighted in this article had implications for the conduct and analysis of this research and, it is argued, have implications for research on (and with) social movements more broadly.

To some extent Böhmke's work has highlighted the tendency amongst some researchers to accept uncritically social movements' own narratives of themselves, including those narratives which are mediated or shaped by intellectuals such as Pithouse.⁴¹ It is certainly the case that, for instance, claims made by social movements (and by some researchers) about the democratic, horizontally organised and participatory nature of their decision-making can be questioned by those willing to seek out alternative evidence.⁴² Indeed, even Martin Legassick, another activist-scholar (particularly involved with the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign) who has at times presented a very supportive view of

social movement practices,⁴³ has begun to claim (in line with Böhmke on this issue) that social movements he has been involved with have tended to end up with a small group of individuals dominating decision-making in a leadership clique.⁴⁴

Data collected for this research supports the view that, in at least some circumstances, democracy and participation does not always function within movements in the ways their least critical advocates claim.⁴⁵ Several interviewees referred to difficulties emerging in social movements as a result of narrow cliques assuming control of movement resources and decision-making power. It was, for example, claimed that the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (which works with Abahlali baseMjondolo in the Poor People's Alliance) has split into several factions, significantly declined or possibly ceased to functionally exist as a result of wrangling over internal power structures.⁴⁶ Similarly, despite the claim that Abahlali baseMjondolo collectively and democratically vet access by researchers,⁴⁷ during the early stages of data collection for the research project which this article contributes towards (in 2010), having failed to receive a response requesting interviews with the Western Cape branch of Abahlali baseMjondolo via the contact information on the movement's website, an interview with the then chairperson was quickly arranged by calling him directly by phone.⁴⁸ By mid-2012 this activist had been removed as chair following complaints and an intervention from the (longer established) Durban branch of the movement. The exact circumstances surrounding accusations of misconduct and their veracity remain somewhat opaque to outsiders, and Abahlali baseMjondolo was not successfully contacted for this research following this.⁴⁹

In other areas, however, Böhmke's claims are more difficult to verify. For instance, Böhmke has claimed that Abahlali baseMjondolo is an affiliate of the Informal Settlements Network (ISN).⁵⁰ ISN is part of the SDI alliance in South Africa. SDI promotes a particular methodology, focusing on savings schemes and micro-credit, in order to promote housing

provision for the urban poor.⁵¹ SDI's approach largely discourages contentious political action, and prioritises gradualist, market-accepting (if not outright pro-market) approaches, with government buy-in as a key strategic aim.⁵² Due to ISN's participation in the structures of SDI, Böhmke suggests Abahlali baseMjondolo is guilty of contradictory praxis.⁵³ On the one hand Abahlali baseMjondolo put forward a 'revolutionary discourse', with its leadership calling for a 'living communism'.⁵⁴ On the other hand, participation in ISN is seen as capitulation to incremental change through profit-driven and marketised approaches.⁵⁵

Importantly, however, it is very unclear whether the relationship between Abahlali baseMjondolo and ISN actually exists. Böhmke appears to be the main – perhaps even the only – source alleging such a link and he does not cite where his information came from.⁵⁶ In the research carried out for this project no evidence of this link apart from Böhmke's claim was found.⁵⁷ An interviewee from SDI, for instance, suggested that Abahlali baseMjondolo and SDI sometimes attend the same meetings and have been in contact, but that there is not a close, strong, regular or formal relationship.⁵⁸ Moreover, Mandisi Majavu posits that Abahlali baseMjondolo deny having ever joined ISN.⁵⁹ Pithouse has also claimed that Abahlali members have been subject to arrest and torture as a result of refusing to affiliate to SDI's structures.⁶⁰ He suggests the government had insisted upon SDI-affiliation as a precondition for considering Abahlali legitimate and a repressive response followed refusal to comply.⁶¹ As Böhmke has first-hand experience of working closely with Abahlali baseMjondolo in the past, it may be the case that he has personal knowledge of the alleged relationship with SDI which is denied by others.⁶² It is nevertheless difficult to ascertain if this is the case and, if it is, whether such a relationship continues. Indeed, despite contradicting each other in their claims about whether Abahlali baseMjondolo has a relationship with SDI, both Pithouse and Böhmke appear to share the view that SDI-affiliation would be a bad thing.⁶³

Politikon controversy

Many of the issues raised above came to something of a head (in academic circles at least) with the 2014 publication of ‘The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo, a South African Social Movement’ by Bandile Mdlalose (former general secretary of Abahlali baseMjondolo) in one of South Africa’s leading academic social science journals, *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*. This nine page article prompted the inclusion of over thirty pages of responses in a ‘Debates and Comments’ section added into the next issue of the journal,⁶⁴ as well as further subsequent responses.⁶⁵

The core of Mdlalose’s critique of the movement she had previously been a leading member of is summed up in her statement that:

the thing that made AbM [Abahlali baseMjondolo] so amazing was our website and press statements. Journalists and academics could always raid this website for juicy quotes. ‘Speak to us, Not about us’, ‘No Land, No House, No Vote’, ‘A Living Politics’. For the journalist and foreign student, AbM was a useful thing to exist because it said things relevant to the budget, Marikana, the Occupy movement, Mandela, neoliberalism, xenophobia, World Cup, Zuma, or even the Comrades Marathon. But there were real problems eating away at the inside of AbM.⁶⁶

Indeed, Mdlalose argues that Abahlali baseMjondolo’s website was key in making the movement ‘the darling of academics, many journalists, documentary makers and Ph.D. students’.⁶⁷ From experience, much of this rings true. For example, Abahlali baseMjondolo’s website is cited frequently in the work which has emerged from this research project.⁶⁸ Moreover, a significant rethinking of assumptions and reorientation of attitude and perspective was necessary in shifting from the earliest stages of the first part of this research

project (around early 2010, based predominantly on desk research reviewing scholarly publications and – largely online – accounts by activists and practitioners), to the completion of the first period of fieldwork and empirical data collection (in mid-2010). It is around this period, whilst visiting the University of the Western Cape's Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, that complexities and counternarratives (from scholars, activists and activist-scholars) contesting the straightforward view of Abahlali baseMjondolo and related social movements as consistently and impressively democratic, grassroots-oriented, ethical and inclusive were first encountered.

Mdlalose points to the contrast between the rhetoric of the movement and its actual practices as she experienced them (indeed, this reflects some of the issues raised by Böhmke, discussed above). Abahlali baseMjondolo was 'supposed to be more democratic than the ANC [African National Congress] or trade unions or anything else that existed in SA',⁶⁹ 'academics and left activists coming from the suburbs found shack-dwellers who could be made to look like their dreams and assumptions' and 'AbM was declared to have a philosophy which is the same as all sorts of writers and to have a politics like other sorts of poor peoples' movements'.⁷⁰ In his book *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, Nigel Gibson argues, for example, that Abahlali represent a form of politics consistent with Frantz Fanon's theoretical approach.⁷¹ Meanwhile, S'bu Zikode (AbM president), notes in the foreword to Gibson's book that 'Richard Pithouse initially told us about Frantz Fanon' and that 'we did not know about Paulo Friere or Frantz Fanon when we began our struggle'.⁷² This is not to say that a thesis such as Gibson's is disproved by a movement having been introduced to particular theories or approaches by academics. However, it does suggest that some caution ought to be applied before assuming that movements genuinely reflect the values or approaches of scholars' favoured theorists or that any such resemblance is a result of

movements' organic, unmediated bottom-up development. This is also indicative of the fact that the relationship dynamic between some academics (such as Pithouse) and social movements (including Abahlali baseMjondolo) is not one based on passive observation, but includes active participation and deliberate attempts to influence the thinking and practice of the movement (indeed, Pithouse has been described as a member of AbM).⁷³ This may not be inherently problematic.⁷⁴ It does, however, raise questions regarding the ways in which this participation and influence takes place and is reported (if it is reported at all) in scholarly (and activist) publications.⁷⁵

According to Mdlalose, despite the rhetoric of democracy and participation, Abahlali was 'a top-down organization' in which the 'founding clique' became increasingly authoritarian.⁷⁶ Ultimately, the movement supported the Democratic Alliance (DA) – South Africa's largest opposition party – in the 2014 national elections. The DA has its roots in a merger between the Democratic Party, which was a (white) liberal parliamentary opposition party in the apartheid era, and the New National Party (NNP), which was a successor to the National Party which governed during apartheid (though the NNP later left the DA, joined the ANC and dissolved).⁷⁷ The DA is frequently perceived as disproportionately (if not predominantly) white and is characterised by its opponents as defending the interests of a (mostly white) economic elite against those of the majority.⁷⁸ Mdlalose characterises the DA as 'pro-capitalist' and Abahlali baseMjondolo's support for it as undermining both the movement's claimed anti-capitalist politics and its previous rhetorical opposition to all electoral politics.⁷⁹ Abahlali baseMjondolo has defended support for the DA as a tactical move in opposition to the ANC and argued that it should not be viewed as endorsement of the DA's overall programme.⁸⁰ Mdlalose notes, though, that electoral support for the DA especially 'is not what made AbM a darling of academics and left activists since 2005'.⁸¹

Similarly, Michael Blake, who was a key figure in organising the Housing Assembly,⁸² commented when interviewed in 2015 on what he termed the ‘limited horizon of Abahlali politics’, arguing that the professed radicalism of Abahlali baseMjondolo ‘evaporates into nothing’ as militancy is not sufficiently linked up with the necessary work of organising. In his view, Abahlali is overly involved in the ‘politics of gesture’ and the making of superficial anti-neoliberal statements rather than engaging seriously with the ‘class politics of housing’.⁸³ He further suggested that endorsing the DA in 2014 led to some Abahlali members and supporters moving away from the group and becoming more willing to engage with the Housing Assembly.⁸⁴

Prior to 2013 (when, according to Mdlalose, the movement became much more ‘quiet on the ground’ and began to shed both members and leaders), academics and suburban activists ‘found [in Abahlali baseMjondolo] people who would prove their theories about the revolt of the poor coming any day’.⁸⁵ Indeed, the language of an imminent or actually existing revolt or ‘rebellion of the poor’ in South Africa has been popular amongst social movement scholars (and advocates) since the early-2010s.⁸⁶ However, more recently, several of the key architects of this narrative have backed away from some of their more optimistic claims, their enthusiasm apparently tempered by a more sober reflection upon the gap between empirical evidence and normative aspirations. For instance, in 2010 Peter Alexander concluded that South Africa’s ‘massive movement of militant local political protests’ (which he termed a ‘rebellion of the poor’) could be explained in part by the fact that ‘neoliberalism has sustained massive inequality, which, linked in particular to policies associated with black economic empowerment, has added to feelings of injustice’.⁸⁷ In contrast, by 2016 Alexander and his colleagues concluded that whilst protests ‘are a direct response to the ANC’s failure to advance economic policies benefitting the majority of the population’, from protest

participants' comments there is, nevertheless, 'no suggestion that material deprivation is linked to the ANC's neo-liberal policies, or to capitalism more broadly... [T]he language of anti-capitalism does not prevail in South Africa's rebellion of the poor'.⁸⁸

Abahlali baseMjondolo's public statements and website frequently link the movement's activities to wider narratives critical of the ANC, neoliberalism and capitalism more broadly. Mdlalose, however, argues that the influence of Abahlali's website, and control over this, led to misleading and inaccurate information being propagated about the movement. This is worth considering in relation to Böhmke's critique (set out above) of the branding of Abahlali baseMjondolo (and other social movements) and the alleged role of Pithouse (and other academics) in this. In Mdlalose's account:

Outsider academics controlled the website. We did not even know the password. This was important because it gave a few people power to control what was there and what was not there. Anything critical that warned of AbM weakness was excluded.⁸⁹

Furthermore, '[t]he movement and the website became two separate things, as if we were in two universes. Other outsiders quoted things that are not accurate, not written by shack-dwellers'.⁹⁰ Mdlalose focuses especially on the role and influence of a particular 'white academic' (unnamed, though identifiable to those in scholarly or activist circles familiar with Abahlali) in shaping this inaccurate narrative.⁹¹ According to Mdlalose, this academic 'drafted our statements. Everything had to go via him. Some of our press statements he wrote word for word without us giving any input'.⁹²

The shift of concern in the public profile of the movement from that of its shack dweller members to those of its academic advocates is described by Mdlalose as 'strangest of all'.⁹³ She argues that 'AbM was used to fight battles in academic areas that shack-dwellers

had no knowledge in and I feel I must add, no interest in'.⁹⁴ This raises serious questions with regard to both the ethics of the ways in which academics engage with social movements and the ways in which scholars (and others who form the audience of movements' public pronouncements) respond to claims made by social movements. Mdlalose gives the example that, following the announcement that 'the department of a good friend of the academic who wrote AbM statements' was to be closed at Middlesex University (in London, UK), '[n]ext thing, a letter in AbM's name, drafted by the academic, went to the university rectors saying that the department closing was "an attack on one part of the struggle to humanise the world"'.⁹⁵

Perhaps more troublingly from the perspective of ethical relationships between researchers and activists, Mdlalose states that:

in doing his doctoral degree, as general secretary, I did not see any communication from the academic writing our press statements seeking permission from the organization and individuals within it to research AbM or us as individuals. At all times during our dealings with him, we thought that he was an actual supporter of the movement. I, and others, opened up only to him and shared information with him on this basis. The academic seems to have left out of his thesis the depth of his own role in AbM. People reading his thesis would not know that he was in daily contact with AbM during my tenure of three years and that he drafted press statements for us all the time. It was these press statements after all that contain our 'own' ideas. He gives the impression that his role in AbM was minor when it was not.⁹⁶

Given that, according to Mdlalose, this academic 'wrote large passages of AbM's many press statements and speeches', 'added lots of content', 'controlled [the] website and mailing list' and 'constantly interfered in... organizational debates', she posits that '[i]t seems

academically problematic to then discover and portray AbM's politics as coming out of us organically when he has in fact played such an influential role in creating this politics from above'.⁹⁷ Whilst Mdlalose's allegations in this regard are indicative of dubious academic practice, they also reflect wider questions of ethics with regard to research (whether in or out of the academy) on vulnerable or marginalised groups. Questions are raised regarding who has ownership and control over the stories of those who participate in such research, and regarding the degree to which genuine informed consent to participate in research is obtained.⁹⁸ Indeed, as discussed further in the next section, there is a case to be made that much (possibly most) academic research in this area contributes to an exploitative, extractive industry.⁹⁹

Responses to Mdlalose's article varied from the supportive to the denunciatory.¹⁰⁰ Some questioned whether the account ought to have been published in a scholarly journal (and the editors of the issue in which Mdlalose's piece appeared responded to this claim).¹⁰¹ Others called for further reflection by scholars (and activists) on the relationships between academia and social movements, with one proposing a code of conduct for social movement research in South Africa.¹⁰² In many ways, the responses to Mdlalose's article further highlight the issues and dilemmas she raises, as well as those which emerge from the contrasting positions of Böhmke and Pithouse discussed above (and, some of which, this article seeks to think through). Ibrahim Steyn, for instance, notes in his reflection on the *Politikon* controversy:

[w]hile the factual accuracy of all claims made in Mdlalose's piece is open to dispute... instead of attempting to silence Mdlalose's voice, left-wing academics and intellectuals should rather use the debate triggered by her piece to critically reflect on how our research and writings are representative of the empirical realities of

movements. We also need to candidly reflect on the power dynamics in social movements.¹⁰³

Steyn argues that ‘the representation of social movements in intellectual spaces is embedded in unequal race, class and gender relations that shape the flow of power in movements. Intellectual representation can thus not be abstracted from the operation of power in social movements’.¹⁰⁴ For activist-scholars (or scholars of activism) reflection on these power dynamics is necessary if there is any hope to avoid (or at least mitigate) the negative – *harmful*, even – effects unequal relationships in research and representation may produce.¹⁰⁵

Implications for research and practice

The problems Mdlalose highlights present challenges for researchers and point to wider dilemmas about both the relationship between scholarship and activism, and the ethics and politics of academics’ involvement in social movements. Indeed, Mdlalose’s article and the responses it provoked reflect challenges and pitfalls associated with the study of social movements in general, and embody in microcosm issues which are relevant not only to Abahlali baseMjondolo but also other social movements in South Africa and beyond.

The tendencies of minimising admissions of weakness, exaggerating strength and of outside academic advocates having (arguably) undue influence are not unique to one movement. Nor are concerns of the potential for cooption of poor people’s movements by better-off or privileged (and frequently white) activist professionals. Two of the most obvious implications of this kind of activity are the danger that relationships between academics (and other more privileged outsiders) and social movements become exploitative, and the danger that outsiders seeking to understand (or perhaps be influenced by) social movements are misled.

In conducting research, especially in relation to marginalised communities, there are good reasons for reflecting upon the possibility of research comprising an extractive process and seeking to avoid this.¹⁰⁶ Often, however, this is easier said than done. The structures of professionalised research (in and outside of academia) are frequently not oriented around the needs and participation of communities being researched and the kinds of outputs which tend to (perhaps necessarily) be produced through this kind of research are not always of use or of interest to those who participated in the research.¹⁰⁷

There are further dilemmas evident in attempts to avoid (or at least mitigate the effects of) extractive research. There is a danger in overpromising what researchers can provide to those participating in their research in terms of benefits of participation, contributions researchers might make to participating communities or likely utility of the research itself.¹⁰⁸ There is also a potential for research participation to be reduced to an instrumental (and possibly coercive), transactional activity – knowledge, experiences or access to communities traded in exchange for favourable presentation in researchers’ platforms or access to incentives and resources (material or otherwise).¹⁰⁹ At its worst this could manifest itself in close to the opposite of the outcomes intended by those seeking to avoid extractive research: the (re)production of relationships between privileged researchers and disempowered Others who are treated as needing experts’ (charitable) interventions.¹¹⁰ Again, these relationships are not certain to be problematic but no resolution to these issues is without its own complexities and (from various perspectives) potential drawbacks.¹¹¹

Kamala Visweswaran points out that there is, for instance, a danger that ‘activist scholars who too quickly grant primacy to the community as a matter of principle may unwittingly cede crucial ground to ideologues’.¹¹² Nick Crossley similarly notes that

[t]he activist, like anybody else, observes events from a particular vantage point which, like any other vantage point, has blind spots as well as advantages. And the very different views and experiences of activists in even the same movement suggest that there is, in any case, no single activist vantage point.¹¹³

Likewise, simplistic accounts of the ethics of (activist-)scholarship on or with social movements and/or marginalised communities do not provide straightforward answers for how researchers might ethically contend with unequal power dynamics and gatekeeping within communities and movements or how they might engage with politics and behaviours to which they are opposed.¹¹⁴ Taking account of these kinds of tensions, Charles Hale, nevertheless, argues for the pursuit of activist-scholarship, in part on the grounds that '[f]ar from being deterrents, the tensions need to be understood as key sources of methodological sophistication and analytical insight'.¹¹⁵

Mdlalose highlights unequal power dynamics in the ways in which the activities of Abahlali baseMjondolo were, in her view, shaped by priorities other than those of shack dwellers whose interests the movement is intended to promote. She highlights, for instance, an occasion when Abahlali members carried out 'just-in-time' research on healing for an academic who had 'made some vague comment about funding', only to stop once it became apparent that no funding would materialise.¹¹⁶ Similarly, she notes that whilst Abahlali baseMjondolo opposes evictions through both protests and legal action, 'the key tactic was protest... known as the "Dunlop", because old tyres were set alight on roads'.¹¹⁷ According to Mdlalose, the movement 'appreciated being known for its "Dunlop" activity, as it slowly became a protest organization rather than a human rights or housing rights organization'.¹¹⁸ Ultimately, however, 'the protests we undertook were less about real anger or real resistance. They became more about impressing funders who could give their money if they wanted, to

many other organizations'.¹¹⁹ In this sense protest action is both performative and 'displayed' to particular audiences (funders especially).¹²⁰

Mdlalose also highlights the ways in which social movement activists may be complicit in the misrepresentation of the movements they are a part of.¹²¹ Social movement activists, and their advocates in academia, may not see anything wrong with representing movements in as positive a light as possible, or with pursuing whatever strategies seem to be most effective, including, for example, seeking to represent movements as fitting with whatever narrative might be most advantageous politically, or in terms of funding, at any given time. Indeed, the effective framing of issues in different terms, 'venue shopping', 'translation' and 'vernacularisation' are widely accepted advocacy tactics in human rights (and other) campaigning.¹²² However, questions emerge regarding what, if any, limits ought to be placed on (mis)representation of social movements (and who gets to do the representing).¹²³ These questions are at the core of the abovementioned disagreements between – and criticisms levelled at – Böhmke and Pithouse (and their supporters and critics).

On the one hand, there exists a view – explained by one activist-scholar in an informal conversation as summing up the views of another (well-known) activist-scholar – that rather than social movements (and their academic advocates) performing the role of speaking truth to power, sometimes it is necessary to tell lies to power. On the other hand, there is the position which Mdlalose refers to as 'the politics of truth'.¹²⁴ Mdlalose sums up the appeal of the former position, and – perhaps – contributes to the latter, in explaining that '[w]e liked to know that we were read all over the world. Big professors would come and visit us from Harvard and their students would spend time with us. We learnt what to say that would interest them'.¹²⁵ She argues, furthermore, that Abahlali baseMjondolo

agreed to tell lies about our branches, our level of membership and our radicalism. This started by giving up control of our website and press statements. But this seemed to be a good idea at the time because we did not have those skills and what did it matter if students overseas wrote stuff about us in essays that were exaggerated. Maybe the ANC would treat us with more respect. So, often also we went along with lies about us in articles and newspapers because it made us seem powerful.¹²⁶

There are, clearly, tensions between these positions, and important ethical questions raised by this. Should, for instance, activists (and scholars for that matter) accept the view (sometimes attributed to Lenin) that anything which advances the political interests of the movement (truthful or otherwise) is ethical?¹²⁷ Is there ever a legitimate place for deliberately lying to or misleading others in the tactical repertoire of social movements? What are the (ethical and political) implications of professional academics involving themselves in social movements deploying these tactics, or even of promoting these tactics for use by movements they have contact with?¹²⁸ Encapsulating several of these dilemmas, Steyn posits that ‘it could be argued that our criticisms of racialised, gendered and classed practices within political spaces of oppressed collectivities may play into the hands of a neoliberal state’.¹²⁹ He asks, however, ‘how can we turn a blind eye to destructive and exclusionary practices and tendencies – i.e. racism and/or race denialism, sexism, tribalism and undemocratic behaviour – that undermine the very struggles of poor people?’¹³⁰ It is incumbent upon activists and scholars to respond to this challenge, which manifests not only in relation to South African housing rights movements or similar contexts but in any number of activist groups, formal and informal, in the global South and in the global North.¹³¹ In doing so, it is necessary for researchers to contend with the question of whose side they are on.¹³² This is not, however, a one-off question with a simple answer. The question must be repeatedly answered throughout

any research process and must also include reckoning with further questions, not just whose side researchers are on but what it means to be on that side in practice.¹³³ This is especially important for human rights research and for research which is intended to contribute to or promote justice rather than affecting towards a (mythical) position of neutrality and dispassionate observation.¹³⁴ It is more important still in relation to social movement research related to human rights, as opposed to other kinds of human rights research (such as the narrowly legal, abstractly theoretical, or empirical but elite-oriented). Shannon Speed, for instance, notes that '[c]oncerns about ethical conduct and the politics of knowledge production are perhaps even more salient and powerful in situations of rights violations in which the "subjects" are in perilous circumstances'.¹³⁵

This article concentrates mainly on the challenges faced by those researching social movements rather than those directly involved in shaping movements' praxis. The conclusion sets out some of the pitfalls associated with scholars' engagement with activism, including in relation to dangers of on the one hand uncritically believing any claims made by or on behalf of social movements and, on the other, of dismissing such claims out of hand as false. Nevertheless, those questions which are not addressed in detail by this article are also worthy of serious consideration by scholars and activists alike. It is, for example, critical that scholars (and activists, and activist-scholars) reflect upon the ethics and politics of – and the (gendered, raced and classed) power-dynamics produced through – engagement with social movements.¹³⁶ Christopher Anthony Loperena, for example, notes that politically engaged or activist researchers 'may strive to create egalitarian relationships with our interlocutors and to create neat alignments' but 'a commitment to politically engaged research does not eliminate power asymmetries, nor does it lead to moral clarity'.¹³⁷ He argues, further, that researchers' 'obligations to diverse communities, academic and nonacademic, each with their own set of

ethical concerns, will ensure we never achieve consensus on what constitutes ethical research practice'.¹³⁸ This is an ongoing dialogue and this article is but one contribution to this necessary – and potentially difficult – conversation.¹³⁹

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, here it is worthwhile highlighting the conceptual significance of conflicts and dilemmas such as those discussed above. It is necessary to maintain a degree of critical distance in attempting to research movements such as those involved in land and housing rights activism in South Africa (but also others). There are three main pitfalls which should be avoided (and which the research upon which this article is based attempts to avoid).

First there is the danger of taking the claims made by social movements and by their academic advocates at face value. If one ignores the branding of social movements,¹⁴⁰ or if one ignores the possibility that propaganda has a place in the knowledge produced by and about social movements, then there is a danger that new scholarship will be of less value.¹⁴¹ Research seeking to understand and impact upon practice, through producing useful recommendations for instance, will be hampered by inaccurate views of the actual lived reality of this practice. For instance, in the case of research aiming to produce useful recommendations for social movements and other actors, for any recommendations made to be maximally useful it is necessary to have as accurate a view as possible of the actual nature and practice of these actors. Recommendations will not be useful (or have impact) if they cannot be implemented due to the limitations which come from a movement's actual (rather than presented or perceived) circumstances. It is of little use to recommend actions which are outside of the scope of possibilities for movements to take. Similarly, useful recommendations on improving practice cannot be made if existing shortcomings are obscured or denied.

The second pitfall relates to the danger of dismissing the praxis of these social movements altogether. There may be an imperative to question everything; that is not to say that there is an imperative to believe nothing claimed by or about social movements. One does not have to fully accept the characterisation of movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo as put forward by Pithouse, Michael Neocosmos or Nigel Gibson to find at least some elements of their scholarship useful.¹⁴² Some of Böhmke's claims about the misrepresentation of social movements (and the roles of academics in this) may be true without undermining the claim that these social movements can play an important role in contemporary political struggles.¹⁴³ The importance of this role is perhaps most evident through movements' provision of the opportunity for members of communities affected by human rights issues to mobilise and participate in voicing their concerns, potentially shaping the agendas of duty bearers and constituencies of support, and through (intermittent) successes in defending and extending the realisation of rights in a material and legal sense (through, for example, preventing evictions and challenging rights-violating laws).¹⁴⁴ Indeed, even as she builds her criticism of the organisation, Mdlalose argues that '[t]here is no doubt that AbM at its best did good work'.¹⁴⁵ It is fruitful to consider this position, and the roles of both academics and social movement activists, in comparison with the view of Bal Sokhi-Bulley on the ways in which human rights are produced and practised. Sokhi-Bulley highlights the role of Human Rights Watch and other international NGOs in doing *good* on the one hand, but also doing other ('dangerous') things, on the other: producing 'government through rights', defining '*what rights are*, what rights matter and what rights situations are worth reporting' as well as the 'correct way of doing rights'.¹⁴⁶ Social movement activists and academics (and those at the nexus of these categories) also contribute to defining what rights are and how (or whether) they ought to be pursued – for better and for worse.

The third danger surrounds the risk of the debates and disagreements between academics and commentators overshadowing discussion of the issues upon which movements work. When it comes to the questions of how land and housing rights might be promoted, it matters very little if specific allegations against and personal criticism of Richard Pithouse or of Heinrich Böhmke have veracity.¹⁴⁷ As Mdlalose puts it, ‘while we are arguing, the people we [are] supposedly working with and struggling with, the vulnerable shack-dwellers, are lost’.¹⁴⁸ This risk also applies to other movements, and, consequently, ought to be kept in mind by all researchers (and others) seeking to advance the causes of social movements or promote human rights as activist-scholars.

Notes

1. Ibrahim Steyn, 'Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa: A Critical Reflection', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 43, no. 2 (2016): 271-285.
2. Ibid.; Bandile Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo, a South African Social Movement', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 41, no. 3 (2014): 345-353.
3. Heinrich Böhmke refers to this as the 'branding' of social movements. See Heinrich Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa', *Dispositions: A Journal*, April 30, 2010, http://dispositionsjournal.blogspot.com/2010_04_01_archive.html [accessed November 25, 2012].
4. Obscuring or denying issues for the purpose of propaganda or branding differs significantly from the notion of 'ethnographic refusal', whereby 'researchers and research participants *together* decide not to make particular information available for use within the academy... not to bury information, but to ensure that communities are able to respond to issues on their own terms' (emphasis in original). See Alex Zahara, 'Refusal as Research Method in Discard Studies', *Discard Studies*, March 21, 2016, <https://discardstudies.com/2016/03/21/refusal-as-research-method-in-discard-studies/> [accessed June 14, 2018]. On propagandist and other dynamics between movements and researchers see Shannon Walsh, "'Uncomfortable Collaborations": Contesting Constructions of the "Poor" in South Africa', *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 255-270; Patrick Bond, 'Rejoinder: Collaborations, Co-optations

& Contestations in Praxis-Based Knowledge Production’, *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 271-275; Ashwin Desai, ‘Rejoinder: The Propagandists, the Professors & their “Poors”’, *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 275-277; Shannon Walsh, ‘A Response & An Update’, *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 278-279.

5. See, for example, Kate Tissington, “‘Tacticians in the Struggle for Change’? Exploring the Dynamics between Legal Organisations and Social Movements Engaged in Rights-Based Struggles in South Africa’, in *Contesting Transformation: Popular Resistance in Twenty-First-Century South Africa*, eds. Marcelle C. Dawson and Luke Sinwell (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 201-221; Dale T. McKinley, ‘The Crisis of the Left in Contemporary South Africa’, in *Contesting Transformation: Popular Resistance in Twenty-First-Century South Africa*, eds. Marcelle C. Dawson and Luke Sinwell (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 23-43.
6. See, for example, Bal Sokhi-Bulley, *Governing (Through) Rights* (Oxford: Hart, 2016); Bal Sokhi-Bulley, ‘Government(ality) By Experts: Human Rights as Governance’, *Law and Critique* 22, no. 3 (2011): 251-271; Neil Stammers, *Human Rights and Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2009).
7. Charles R. Hale, ‘Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology’, *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (2006): 98.
8. See, for example, Jonathan Faull, ‘In Praise of the South African Constitution’, *Africa is a Country*, February 16, 2012, <https://africasacountry.wordpress.com/2012/02/16/praising-the-south-african->

constitution/ [accessed June 11, 2018]; Jackie Dugard, *South Africa: Review of Rights Discourse*. RIPOCA Research Notes 9-2011, Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2011).

9. See, for example, Haroon Borat, 'FactCheck: Is South Africa the Most Unequal Society in the World?', *The Conversation*, September 30, 2015, <https://theconversation.com/factcheck-issouth-africa-the-mostunequal-society-in-the-world-48334> [accessed March 6, 2016]; Matthew Evans, *Transformative Justice: Remediating Human Rights Violations Beyond Transition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
10. See, for example, Richard Pithouse, *Writing the Decline: On the Struggle for South Africa's Democracy* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2016).
11. See, for example, Evans, *Transformative Justice*; Dugard, *South Africa: Review of Rights Discourse*; Tissington, "'Tacticians in the Struggle for Change'?", 201–221; Stammers, *Human Rights and Social Movements*. See also, Hannah Miller, 'A Change in Charity Law for England and Wales: Examining War on Want's Foremost Adoption of the New Human Rights Charitable Purpose', *International Journal of Human Rights* 16, no. 7 (2012): 1003–1022.
12. See, for example, Stammers, *Human Rights and Social Movements*; Bill Bowring, 'Karl Marx and "Marxism"', *The Real Movement Which Abolishes the Present State of Things*, September 11, 2017, <https://bbowring.com/2017/09/11/karl-marx-and-marxism/> [accesses 11 June, 2018]; Matthew Evans, 'Trade unions as human rights organizations', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 7, no. 3 (2015): 466–483; Paul Gready, 'The Politics of Human Rights', *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 4

- (2003): 745-757; Shannon Speed, 'At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology: Toward a Critically Engaged Activist Research', *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006): 66-76.
13. Margot E. Salomon, 'Human rights are also about social justice', *Open Democracy*, July 25, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/margot-salomon/human-rights-are-also-about-social-justice> [accessed August 7, 2013].
 14. Matilda Aberese Ako, Nana Akua Anyidoho and Gordon Crawford, 'NGOs, Rights-Based Approaches and the Potential for Progressive Development in Local Contexts: Constraints and Challenges in Northern Ghana', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 5, no. 1 (2013): 69.
 15. Poor People's Alliance, 'About the Alliance', <http://sekwanele.wordpress.com/about/> [accessed September 1, 2010].
 16. Walsh, "Uncomfortable Collaborations", 260.
 17. Ibid.
 18. See, for example, Michael Blake, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, July 6, 2012; Michael Blake, personal interview, Johannesburg, South Africa, April 10, 2015; Lorraine Heunis and Eleanor Hoedemaker, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, August 7, 2012; Dale T. McKinley, *Labour and Community in Transition: Alliances for Public Services in South Africa*. Municipal Services Project Occasional Paper No. 24, June (Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, 2014). See, further, Evans, *Transformative Justice*.

19. See, for example, SDI, *Shack/Slum Dwellers International Annual Report 2012* (Shack/Slum Dwellers International: Cape Town, 2012); SDI Programme Officer, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, August 3, 2012.
20. See, Evans, *Transformative Justice*.
21. One might think, for example, of extending Ron Dudai's characterisation of the human rights report genre as 'advocacy with footnotes' further. Any research seeking to effect social change (or influence processes which in turn might effect social change) – any scholarship as activism – can be seen as advocacy with footnotes regardless of whether it is carried out in an NGO or academic setting and regardless of whether it is disseminated in the form of a report or a peer-reviewed paper. There are differences, of course (different audiences and registers, for instance), but a key similarity between this kind of scholarship and the reports analysed by Dudai is the importance placed upon evidencing claims and conferring legitimacy upon the author's position through footnoting this evidence. In this sense both activist-scholarship and human rights reports invite their audiences not simply to trust the author but seek to demonstrate that the author ought to be trusted (and their views acted upon) due to the evident, verifiable credibility of their claims – the tensions which result from this are also shared across the two genres. See Ron Dudai, 'Advocacy with Footnotes: The Human Rights Report as a Literary Genre', review of *Through No Fault of Their Own: Punitive House Demolitions during the al-Aqsa Intifada* by Ronen Shnayderman (trans. Zvi Shulman), *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2006): 783-795. Furthermore, scholarship as activism, even in the form of drawing attention to politically inconvenient facts is not necessarily safer (or less courageous) than social movement-embedded forms of activist-scholarship. See, for

example, Kamala Visweswaran, 'Conclusion: Fragile Facts – On Scholarship and Activism', *Cultural Dynamics* 23, no. 1 (2011): 78-79.

22. On organic intellectuals, see David Forgacs (ed.), *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 300-311. See also Mark Cresswell and Helen Spandler, 'The Engaged Academic: Academic Intellectuals and the Psychiatric Survivor Movement', *Social Movement Studies*, 12, no. 2 (2013): 141-142; Adam Gary Lewis, 'Ethics, Activism and the Anti-Colonial: Social Movement Research as Resistance', *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 230-231.

23. See, for example, Charles Hale, 'What Is Activist Research?', *Social Science Research Council Items* 2, no. 1/2 (2001): 13-15; Hale, 'Activist Research v. Cultural Critique', 96-120; David Croteau, 'Which Side Are You On? The Tension between Movement Scholarship and Activism', in *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*, eds. David Croteau, William Hoynes and Charlotte Ryan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 32-35; see also, Dawson and Sinwell, 'Ethical and Political Challenges of Participatory Action Research in the Academy', 177-191; Assata Zerai, 'Models for Unity between Scholarship and Grassroots Activism', *Critical Sociology* 28, no. 1/2 (2002): 201-216; Lara Montesinos Coleman, 'Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique: Departing from Activist Scholarship', *International Political Sociology* 9, no. 3 (2015): 263-280.

24. Kevin Gillan and Jenny Pickerill, 'The Difficult and Hopeful Ethics of Research on, and with, Social Movements', *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 133-143; Marcelle C. Dawson and Luke Sinwell, 'Ethical and Political Challenges of Participatory Action Research in the Academy: Reflections on Social Movements and

Knowledge Production in South Africa', *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 177-191; The Autonomous Geographies Collective, 'Beyond Scholar Activism: Making Strategic Interventions Inside and Outside the Neoliberal University', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 245-275.

25. See, for example, Heinrich Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle', *Dispositions: A Journal*, May 20, 2012, http://dispositionsjournal.blogspot.com/2012/05/social-movement-hustle_20.html [accessed December 14, 2012].
26. Nigel C. Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali baseMjondolo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'; Heinrich Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals: Don't talk about us talking about the poor', *PoliticsWeb*, October 21, 2010, <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=206254&sn=Detail&pid=71616> [accessed December 14, 2012].
27. See, for example, Richard Pithouse, 'Solidarity, Co-option and Assimilation: The Necessity, Promises and Pitfalls of Global Linkages for South African Movements', in *Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2006), 247-286; Pithouse, *Writing the Decline*; Richard Pithouse, 'Forging New Political Identities in the Shanty Towns of Durban, South Africa', *Historical Materialism* 26, no. 2 (2018).

28. See, for example, Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals'; Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle'; 031 Business, 'Q&A with Heinrich Böhmke', *031 Business*, July 27, 2016, <http://www.031business.com/2016/07/27/qa-with-heinrich-bohmke/> [accessed June 11, 2018].
29. See, for example, Ashwin Desai and Heinrich Böhmke, 'Mpumalanga's New War', in Ashwin Desai, *We Are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-apartheid South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 82-90; Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle'. Pithouse has also co-authored with Desai in the past; see, for example, Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse, 'Sanction All Revolts: A Reply to Rebecca Pointer', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2004): 295-314.
30. Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*.
31. Indeed, Böhmke derides Pithouse and others as 'Abahlologists'. See New Frank Talk, 'Correspondence between Prof John Comaroff and Heinrich Böhmke', *New Frank Talk* 13 (March 2013), <http://heinrichbohmke.com/2013/05/comaroff/#Correspondence1> [accessed June 11, 2018]; Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'; Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals'.
32. Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle'.
33. Ibid., 21; Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'; Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals'.

34. Mandisi Majavu, 'I Thus Caught That Colonial Mind-Set At Work: The Mis-Representation Of Post-Apartheid Social Movements', *ZNet*, April 9, 2012, <http://www.zcommunications.org/i-thus-caught-that-colonial-mind-set-at-work-the-mis-representation-of-post-apartheid-social-movements-by-mandisi-majavu> [accessed December 14, 2012]; Mandisi Majavu, "'White talk" reconstructs whiteness as victimised personality', *Debate*, listserv message posted April 16, 2012, <http://lists.fahamu.org/pipermail/debate-list/2012-April/028527.html> [Accessed December 14, 2012].

35. See, for example, Pithouse, *Writing the Decline*.

36. By this, Pithouse presumably means literature which (in his view) contributes to promoting the domination of social movements by academics or NGOs in relation to their favoured methods, approaches and modes of analysis, as opposed to literature which supports the autonomy and independence of poor people's struggles. See Pithouse, 'Solidarity, Co-option and Assimilation', 256-257, 278.

37. See, for example, Rebecca Pointer, 'Questioning the Representation of South Africa's "New Social Movements": A Case Study of the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2004): 271-294; Desai and Pithouse, 'Sanction All Revolts', 295-314; Buntu Siwisa, 'Crowd Renting or Struggling from Below? The Concerned Citizens' Forum in Mpumalanga Township, Durban, 1999-2005', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 4 (2008): 919-936; Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'; Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals'; Majavu, 'I Thus Caught That Colonial Mind-Set At Work'; Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle'; Who Is Heinrich Bohmke, 'The Lies and Distortions of Heinrich Bohmke',

<https://whoisheinrichbomke.weebly.com/> [accessed June 11, 2018]. The email correspondence (published in the Black Consciousness-oriented journal *New Frank Talk*, having ‘fall[en] from a truck’) between Böhmké and the anthropologist and Africanist John Comaroff, and between Böhmké and representatives of the *Harvard International Review*, is particularly depressing. See Athi Mongezeleli Joja and Andile Mngxitama, ‘Introduction’, *New Frank Talk* 13 (March 2013), <http://heinrichbohmke.com/2013/05/comaroff/#Introduction> [accessed June 11, 2018]; *New Frank Talk*, ‘Correspondence between Prof John Comaroff and Heinrich Böhmké’; *New Frank Talk*, ‘Correspondence between Harvard International Review and Heinrich Böhmké’, *New Frank Talk* 13 (March 2013), <http://heinrichbohmke.com/2013/05/comaroff/#Correspondence2> [accessed June 11, 2018].

38. Dawson and Sinwell, ‘Ethical and Political Challenges of Participatory Action Research in the Academy’, 180-181.
39. Dawson and Sinwell, ‘Ethical and Political Challenges of Participatory Action Research in the Academy’, 181. For reflection on and discussion of somewhat similar critiques of activist-scholarship in the context of the UK, see The Autonomous Geographies Collective, ‘Beyond Scholar Activism’.
40. For further discussion of, and reflection upon, the dynamics and dilemmas of researcher positionality see, for example, Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani (eds.), *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy, and Activism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

41. See, for example, Matt Birkinshaw, 'Abahlali baseMjondolo: "a homemade politics" – Rights, democracy and social movements in South Africa' (paper presented at Alternative Futures and Popular Protest, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, March 15-17, 2009), <http://libcom.org/library/abahlali-basemjondolo-%E2%80%98homemade-politics%E2%80%99> [accessed December 14, 2012]; Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*. See also Matthew Evans, review of *Fanonian Practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali baseMjondolo* by Nigel C. Gibson, *Social Movement Studies* 12, no. 4 (2013): 491-492.
42. See, for example, Pointer, 'Questioning the Representation of South Africa's "New Social Movements"', 271-294.
43. Martin Legassick, 'Housing battles in post-Apartheid South Africa: The Case of Mandela Park, Khayelitsha', *South African Labour Bulletin* 27, no. 6 (2003); Martin Legassick, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, August 4, 2010.
44. Martin Legassick, 'The state of the left in South Africa' (paper presented at 'Politics in South Africa Today', Dialogue, Harold Wolpe Memorial Trust, Johannesburg, July 2011), <http://www.wolpetrust.org.za/dialogue2011/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20The%20state%20of%20the%20left%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf> [accessed December 14, 2012], 3.
45. See, for example, Mike Louw, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, July 6, 2012; Blake, personal interview, July 6, 2012; Soraya Hendricks, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, July 11, 2012.

46. See, for example, Blake, personal interview, July 6, 2012; Heunis and Hoedemaker, personal interview, August 7, 2012; Hendricks, personal interview, July 11, 2012; Mtetho Xali, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, August 3, 2012.
47. See, for example, Abahlali baseMjondolo, 'A Brief Guide to the History and Praxis of Abahlali baseMjondolo for NGOs, Academics, Activists and Churches Seeking a Relationship with the Movement', May 22, 2007, <http://www.abahlali.org/node/1391> [accessed September 1, 2010]; see also Mncedisi Twalo, personal interview, Cape Town, South Africa, July 4, 2012.
48. It is not *prima facie* clear whether this was an instance of circumventing the problematic dynamics of gatekeeping or of insufficient conformity to the processes set out by the movement – or neither, or both. Accounts do exist of the messy realities of this kind of research. However, these often concentrate on raising dilemmas and questions rather than on providing answers to them, and much of the literature which does propose solutions to potentially problematic dynamics between researchers and the communities and movements with which they engage (proposing, for instance, participatory coproduction of research) is silent on the question of how difficult or problematic dynamics within movements or communities might ethically be navigated. For examples of the former, see Jonathan Darling, 'Emotions, Encounters and Expectations: The Uncertain Ethics of "The Field"', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 6, no. 2 (2014): 201-212; Njoki Wamai, 'First Contact with the Field: Experiences of an Early Career Researcher in the Context of National and International Politics in Kenya', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 6, no. 2 (2014): 213-222. For an example of the latter (proposing coproduction), see Graeme Chesters, 'Social Movements and the Ethics of Knowledge Production', *Social Movement*

Studies 11, no. 2 (2012): 145-160 and for a discussion of these types of proposals, see Carl Wilmsen, 'Extraction, empowerment, and relationships in the practice of participatory research' (paper presented at the 11th Annual Community Forestry and Environmental Research Partnerships [CFERP] Workshop, Brandon Springs Group Center, Land Between the Lakes, Tennessee, September 5-9, 2007), https://nature.berkeley.edu/community_forestry/Workshops/2007/Extraction%20empowerment%20and%20relationships%20unlinked.pdf [accessed June 12, 2018]; also Hale, 'What Is Activist Research?', 13-15, particularly the (unanswered) questions at 15 and Charles R. Hale, 'In Praise of "Reckless Minds": Making a Case for Activist Anthropology', in *Anthropology Put to Work*, eds. Les W. Field and Richard G. Fox (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 114-116. In contrast to the literature which proposes an increased melding of activism and scholarship (especially through use of movement-embedded and coproduced ethnography) in order to address these issues, Lara Montesinos Coleman argues that 'the "gaps" between solidarity and writing are not a problem to be solved. Rather, they are productive of a critical ethos'. See Coleman, 'Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique', 264.

49. See Abahlali baseMjondolo., 'Collectivism vs. Individualism: Press Statement', April 19, 2012, <http://abahlali.org/node/8726> [accessed January 29, 2013]; Abahlali baseMjondolo, 'Election of an Interim Committee for AbM Western Cape, QQ Section, Khayelitsha, Cape Town, Sunday 22 April 2012', April 26, 2012, <http://abahlali.org/node/8747> [accessed January 29, 2013]; Abahlali baseMjondolo of the Western Cape, 'Clarification on role of Mzonke Poni in Abahlali baseMjondolo', press statement, January 25, 2013, *New Frank Talk* 13 (March 2013), <http://heinrichbohmk.com/2013/05/comaroff/#ABMletter> [accessed June 11, 2018];

Joja and Mngxitama, 'Introduction'; New Frank Talk, 'Correspondence between Prof John Comaroff and Heinrich Böhmke'.

50. Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.

51. SDI Programme Officer, personal interview, August 3, 2012; Sandra van Rensburg, personal interview, Johannesburg, South Africa, March 13, 2015; Leopold Podlashuc, *The South African Homeless People's Federation: Interrogating the myth of participation*. Working Paper, African Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, 2011).

52. SDI Programme Officer, personal interview, August 3, 2012; van Rensburg, personal interview, March 13, 2015; Podlashuc, *The South African Homeless People's Federation*.

53. Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.; see also Podlashuc, *The South African Homeless People's Federation*.

56. Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.

57. Ibid.

58. Van Rensburg, personal interview, March 13, 2015.

59. Majavu, 'I Thus Caught That Colonial Mind-Set At Work'.

60. Richard Pithouse, 'Fidelity to Fanon', in *Living Fanon: Global Perspectives*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 232.

61. Ibid.
62. Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'; Böhmke, 'The shackdwellers and the intellectuals'.
63. Pithouse, 'Fidelity to Fanon', 232; Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.
64. See, Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo'; Joleen Steyn Kotze, 'Note from the Editor', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 113-115; Patrick Bond, 'The Intellectual Meets the South African Social Movement: A Code of Conduct is Overdue, When Researching Such a Conflict-Rich Society', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 117-122; Shannon Walsh, 'The Philosopher and His Poor: The Poor-Black as Object for Political Desire in South Africa', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 123-127; Steven Friedman, 'Letter for concern by Steven Friedman and signatories', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 129-131; Lisa Thompson and Pieter Fourie, 'Letter of Reply from the Editors of Vol. 41, No. 3', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 133-140; Mondli Hlatshwayo, 'White Power and Privilege in Academic and Intellectual Spaces of South Africa: The Need for Sober Reflection', *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2015): 141-145.
65. For example, Steyn, 'Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa', 271-285.
66. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 345.
67. Ibid.

68. See, for example, Matthew Evans, 'How can land reform be utilised to facilitate the right to housing in urban areas of South Africa?', unpublished MA dissertation, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, September 2010; Matthew Evans, 'Advancing Transformative Justice? A Case Study of a Trade Union, Social Movement and NGO Network in South Africa', PhD thesis, University of York, October 2013; Evans, *Transformative Justice*.
69. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 349.
70. Ibid., 345. In this regard, see, for example, Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*.
71. Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*.
72. S'bu Zikode, 'Foreword', in Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, v.
73. Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, 175-176.
74. See, for example, Lewis, 'Ethics, Activism and the Anti-Colonial', 230-231; David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 11-12; David Graeber, 'Anarchism, academia, and the avant-garde', in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An introductory anthology of anarchy in the academy*, eds. Randall Amster, Abraham DeLeon, Luis A. Fernandez, Anthony J. Nocella, II and Deric Shannon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 111-112.
75. Indeed, Pithouse does not always report his relationship with Abahlali baseMjondolo in his writing on the movement. Likewise, as discussed elsewhere, it is also not always clear by what criteria some intellectuals' relationships with movements are categorised by scholars such as Gibson as problematic, whereas others (such as

AbM's relationship with Pithouse) are viewed as benign. See Evans, review of *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*; Matthew Evans, 'Snapshots of repression and resistance', review of *Writing the Decline: On the Struggle for South Africa's Democracy* by Richard Pithouse, *Historia: Journal of the Historical Association of South Africa* 62, no. 1 (2017): 131-133; see also Walsh, "'Uncomfortable Collaborations'", 262.

76. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 349.

77. South African History Online, 'National Party (NP)', *South African History Online*, March 30, 2011, www.sahistory.org.za/topic/national-party-np [accessed September 7, 2017].

78. See, for example, Mahlatse Mahlase, 'DA has its work cut out to show it's not a "white party with a black leader"', *News24*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Columnists/MahlatseGallens/da-has-its-work-cut-out-to-show-its-not-a-white-party-with-a-black-leader-20180413> [accessed June 12, 2018]; Donwald Pressly, 'SACP: DA-IFP alliance is "elite enclave"', *Mail and Guardian*, March 25, 2004, <https://mg.co.za/article/2004-03-25-sacp-daifp-alliance-is-elite-enclave> [accessed June 12, 2018].

79. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 345.

80. See, for example, Sibusiso Tshabalala, 'Why Abahlali endorsed the DA: S'bu Zikode speaks to GroundUp', *GroundUp*, May 5, 2014, <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/why-abahlali-endorsed-da-sbu-zikode-speaks-groundup/> [accessed June 11, 2018].

81. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 345. She is also scathing about the alleged behaviour of the movement's president, see *ibid.*, 349.
82. Blake, who had worked for the International Labour Research and Information Group, unexpectedly died in late 2017. See Workers' World Media Productions, 'Remembering Michael Blake 1954-2017', *Workers' World Media Productions*, October 6, 2017, <http://www.wwmp.org.za/index.php/2-uncategorised/390-remembering-michael-blake-1954-2017> [accessed June 13, 2018].
83. Blake, personal interview, April 10, 2015.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 345.
86. See, for example, Peter Alexander, 'Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests – a preliminary analysis', *Review of African Political Economy* 37, no. 123 (2010): 25-40; Peter Alexander and Peter Pfaffe, 'Social Relationships to the Means and Ends of Protest in South Africa's Ongoing Rebellion of the Poor: The Balfour Insurrections', *Social Movement Studies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 204–221; Pithouse, *Writing the Decline*.
87. See Alexander, 'Rebellion of the poor', 37.
88. See Peter Alexander, Carin Runciman and Trevor Ngwane, 'South Africa's Rebellion of the Poor', in *Third International Conference on Strikes and Social Conflicts: Combined historical approaches to conflict*. Proceedings, eds. Martí Marín Corbera, Xavier Domènech Sampere and Ricard Martínez i Muntada (Barcelona: CEFID-UAB, 2016), 157. See also Sam Ashman, Zachary Levenson and Trevor Ngwane, 'South Africa's ANC: The Beginning of the End?', *Catalyst* 1, no. 2 (2017): 75-106 and, for

some discussion of Pithouse's changing tone, see Evans, 'Snapshots of repression and resistance'.

89. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 347.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 348-349.

97. Ibid., 349.

98. See, for example, Eileen Pittaway, Linda Bartolomei and Richard Hugman, "'Stop Stealing Our Stories": The Ethics of Research with Vulnerable Groups', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 2 (2010): 229-251; Human Rights Media Centre, *The Story is Yours, The Choice is Yours: Media Ethics for Storytellers* (Cape Town: Human Rights Media Centre, 2006); Paul Gready, 'Introduction – "Responsibility to the Story"', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 2 (2010): 177-190.

99. See, for example, Anne Campbell, "'Extractive" Research and Its Prevention', Higher Education + International Development, June 15, 2013, <https://anneccampbell.wordpress.com/2013/06/15/extractive-research-and-its-prevention/> [accessed June 12, 2018].

100. See, Steyn Kotze, 'Note from the Editor'; Bond, 'The Intellectual Meets the South African Social Movement'; Walsh, 'The Philosopher and His Poor'; Steven Friedman, 'Letter for concern'; Thompson and Fourie, 'Letter of Reply'; Hlatshwayo, 'White Power and Privilege in Academic and Intellectual Spaces of South Africa'.
101. Steven Friedman, 'Letter for concern'; Thompson and Fourie, 'Letter of Reply'.
102. See, for example, Bond, 'The Intellectual Meets the South African Social Movement'; Walsh, 'The Philosopher and His Poor'; Hlatshwayo, 'White Power and Privilege in Academic and Intellectual Spaces of South Africa'.
103. Steyn, 'Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa', 273.
104. Ibid. (footnote omitted).
105. See, for example, Hale, 'In Praise of "Reckless Minds"', 123.
106. See, for example, Campbell, "'Extractive" Research and Its Prevention'; Sandra Kouritzin and Satoru Nakagawa, 'Toward a nonextractive research ethics for transcultural, translingual research: perspectives from the coloniser and the colonised', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (2018), DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2018.1427755; Adam J.P. Gaudry, 'Insurgent Research', *Wičazo Ša Review* 26, no. 1 (2011): 113-136.
107. Campbell, "'Extractive" Research and Its Prevention'; Croteau, 'Which Side Are You On?', 20, 27-28; Cresswell and Spandler, 'The Engaged Academic', 143-144.

108. See, for example, Paul Gready, 'First Encounters: Early Career Researchers and Fieldwork', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 6, no. 2 (2014): 195-200.
109. Miriam George, 'Ethical Lessons Learned from Conducting Refugee-Based Research in an Indian Refugee Camp', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 7, no. 3 (2015): 459.
110. See, for example, Darling, 'Emotions, Encounters and Expectations', 208-210; Pittaway, Bartolomei and Hugman, "'Stop Stealing Our Stories'", 229-251; Speed, 'At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology', 66-76. See also Walsh, "'Uncomfortable Collaborations'", 263 and, more generally, Teju Cole, 'The White-Savior Industrial Complex', *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/> [accessed June 13, 2018].
111. See, for example, Wilmsen, 'Extraction, empowerment, and relationships'; Dawson and Sinwell, 'Ethical and Political Challenges of Participatory Action Research in the Academy', 177-191; Speed, 'At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology', 66-76.
112. She further argues that '[a]ctivist-generated paradigms are not always superior to "objective" or expert-oriented paradigms', positing that '[i]n arenas like the courtroom, it is not only legitimate, but appropriate, to present scholarly consensus and objective scholarship where it exists on contentious issues'. See Visweswaran, 'Fragile Facts', 76; see also Hale, 'Activist Research v. Cultural Critique', 108-109.
113. Nick Crossley, 'Response to Cresswell and Spandler', *Social Movement Studies* 12, no. 2 (2013): 156.

114. Whilst it is common for researchers to engage with movements whose aims they have some degree of sympathy with, complexity and difficulties may be most obvious when researchers engage with movements – or encounter community dynamics – with which they profoundly disagree. One might reasonably hope that even those not conducting human rights research per se would nevertheless seek to prioritise ethical principles consistent with human rights in the conduct of their research. This becomes complicated in instances where principles of human rights (and indeed of research ethics) come into tension with one another. If, for example, researchers are on the one hand seeking to avoid conducting extractive research and on the other wish to avoid assisting movements pursuing inegalitarian or anti-human rights ends, then a straightforwardly ethical resolution is not obvious (particularly when consideration is given to the potential for research to inflict a form of violence upon researchers themselves). See, for example, S.J. Creek, ‘A Personal Reflection on Negotiating Fear, Compassion and Self-Care in Research’, *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 273-277; Victoria Sanford, ‘Introduction’, in *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy, and Activism*, eds. Victoria Sanford and Asale Angel-Ajani (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 10-11; Wamai, ‘First Contact with the Field’, 213–222, especially 217; Hale, ‘What Is Activist Research?’, 15.

115. Hale, ‘In Praise of “Reckless Minds”’, 105.

116. Mdlalose, ‘The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo’, 348.

117. Ibid., 346.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid.

120. On the concept of ‘displaying’ and its relationship to performativity, see Janet Finch, ‘Displaying Families’, *Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2007): 65-81, especially 76-77.
121. Mdlalose, ‘The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo’, 346.
122. See, for example, Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 18; Sally Engle Merry, ‘Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle’, *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006): 38-51; Peggy Levitt and Sally Merry, ‘Vernacularization on the ground: local uses of global women’s rights in Peru, China, India and the United States’, *Global Networks* 9, no. 4 (2009): 441-461; Jo Becker, *Campaigning for Justice: Human Rights Advocacy in Practice* (Stanford: Stranford University Press, 2013), 256. For a critical reflection on issues related to this, see Coleman, ‘Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique’, 263-280.
123. See, for example, Pointer, ‘Questioning the Representation of South Africa’s “New Social Movements”’, 271-294; Steyn, ‘Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa’, 271-285; Desai, ‘The Propagandists, the Professors & their “Poors”’, 275-277. See also Hale, ‘In Praise of “Reckless Minds”’, 112, 118.
124. Mdlalose, ‘The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo’, 350. Contending with related dilemmas, Coleman asks of activist-scholars, ‘[h]ow do we “speak truth to power” when the very politics of truth is at stake?’ adding that ‘writing “for” or “with” those in struggle implies inserting our writing within parameters of intelligibility that define “us” (the resistance) and our field of action’. This risks

activist-scholarship becoming ‘entrap[ped] within frames that obscure entanglements between struggles and the very relations of power that they seek to contest’. See Coleman, ‘Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique’, 264.

125. Mdlalose, ‘The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo’, 348.
126. Ibid., 351.
127. David Shub, *Lenin: A Biography* Revised Edition (London: Pelican Books, 1966), 450-451.
128. See, for example, Steyn, ‘Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa’, 271-285.
129. Ibid., 279.
130. Ibid.
131. See, for example, Lara Montesinos Coleman and Serena A. Bassi, ‘Deconstructing Militant Manhood: Masculinities in the Disciplining of (Anti-)Globalization Politics’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13, no. 2 (2011): 204-224.
132. Howard S. Becker, ‘Whose Side Are We On?’, *Social Problems* 14, no. 3 (1967): 239-247. See also Croteau, ‘Which Side Are You On?’, 20-40.
133. See, for example, Darling, ‘Emotions, Encounters and Expectations’, 206-208; Hale, ‘Activist Research v. Cultural Critique’, 105; Christopher Anthony Loperena, ‘A Divided Community: The Ethics and Politics of Activist Research’, *Current Anthropology* 57, no. 3 (2016): 332-346; Anne de Jong, ‘The Gaza Freedom Flotilla:

- Human Rights, Activism and Academic Neutrality', *Social Movement Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012): 193-209; Cresswell and Spandler, 'The Engaged Academic'.
134. Gready, 'First Encounters', 195-200; Brendan Browne and Luke Moffett, 'Finding Your Feet in the Field: Critical Reflections of Early Career Researchers on Field Research in Transitional Societies', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 6, no. 2 (2014): 223-237; de Jong, 'The Gaza Freedom Flotilla'; see also Alvin W. Gouldner, 'Anti-Minotaur: The Myth of a Value-Free Sociology', *Social Problems* 9, no. 3 (1962): 199-213; Becker, 'Whose Side Are We On?'.
 135. Speed, 'At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology', 67. See also Sanford, 'Introduction', 1-15.
 136. See, for example, Steyn, 'Intellectual Representations of Social Movements in Post-apartheid South Africa', 271-285; Hale, 'In Praise of "Reckless Minds"', 116-118; see also Coleman and Bassi, 'Deconstructing Militant Manhood'.
 137. Loperena, 'A Divided Community', 345.
 138. Ibid.
 139. See also, for example, Walsh, "'Uncomfortable Collaborations'", 255-270; Coleman, 'Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique', 263-280.
 140. Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.
 141. Adam J.P. Gaudry, for example, argues that '[i]n truth, *all research is propaganda*' and suggests researchers should be open about this. See Gaudry, 'Insurgent Research', 133 (emphasis in original).

142. See, for example, Richard Pithouse, 'The Complicated Relationship of Transnational Organizations and Local Popular Movements: Reflections from South Africa', *Progressive Planner* 183 (2010): 16-19; Richard Pithouse, 'To be Citizens, Not Children', *The South African Civil Society Information Service*, August 29, 2011, <http://sacsis.org.za/site/article/737.1> [accessed October 10, 2011]; Michael Neocosmos, 'Rethinking Politics in Southern Africa Today: Elements of a Critique of Political Liberalism', in *Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2006), 55-102; Nigel C. Gibson, 'Introduction – Calling everything into question: Broken promises, social movements and emergent intellectual currents in post-apartheid South Africa', in *Challenging Hegemony: Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2006), 1-53. See also Evans, review of *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*; Evans, 'Snapshots of repression and resistance'.
143. See, for example, Böhmke, 'The Branding of Social Movements in South Africa'.
144. See, for example, Tissington, "'Tacticians in the Struggle for Change'"; McKinley, 'The Crisis of the Left in Contemporary South Africa'.
145. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 346.
146. See, Sokhi-Bulley, *Governing (Through) Rights*, 64, 71; see also, Sokhi-Bulley, 'Government(ality) By Experts', 251-271; Speed, 'At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology', 67.

147. See, for example, Böhmke, 'Ventriloquism, Fanon and the Social Movement Hustle'; Majavu, 'I Thus Caught That Colonial Mind-Set At Work'.
148. Mdlalose, 'The Rise and Fall of Abahlali baseMjondolo', 350.